

FLU VS. COVID-19: SIMILARITIES & DIFFERENCES

Influenza (Flu) and COVID-19 are both contagious respiratory illnesses, but are caused by different viruses. COVID-19 is caused by infection called SARS-CoV-2, and flu is caused by infection with influenza viruses. Because some of the symptoms of flu and COVID-19 are similar, it may be hard to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone, and testing may be needed to help confirm a diagnosis. Flu and COVID-19 share many characteristics, but there are some key differences between the two.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

SIMILARITIES

Both COVID-19 and flu can have varying degrees of signs and symptoms, ranging from no symptoms (asymptomatic) to severe symptoms. Common symptoms that COVID-19 and flu share include:

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle pain or body aches
- Headache

DIFFERENCES

Flu viruses can cause mild to severe illness, including common signs and symptoms listed above. Other signs and symptoms of COVID-19, different from flu, may include change in or loss of taste or smell.

HOW LONG SYMPTOMS APPEAR AFTER EXPOSURE & INFECTION

SIMILARITIES

For both COVID-19 and flu, 1 or more days can pass between a person becoming infected and when he/she starts to experience symptoms.

DIFFERENCES

A person can develop flu symptoms anywhere from 1 to 4 days after infection, while with COVID-19, a person develops symptoms 5 days after being infected, but symptoms can appear as early as 2 days after infection or as late as 14 days after infection, and the time range can vary.

HOW LONG SOMEONE CAN SPREAD THE VIRUS

SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES
<p>For both COVID-19 and flu, it's possible to spread the virus for at least one (1) day before experiencing any symptoms.</p>	<p>If a person has COVID-19, they may be contagious for a longer period of time than if they had flu.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Flu: Most people with flu are contagious for about one (1) day before they show symptoms. Older children and adults with flu appear to be most contagious during the initial 3-4 days of their illness but many remain contagious for about 7 days. Infants and people with weakened immune systems can be contagious for even longer. ○ COVID-19: How long someone can spread the virus that causes COVID-19 is still under investigation. It's possible for people to spread the virus for about 2 days before experiencing signs or symptoms and remain contagious for at least 10 days after signs or symptoms first appeared. If someone is asymptomatic or their symptoms go away, it's possible to remain contagious for at least 10 days after testing positive for COVID-19.

HOW IT SPREADS

SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES
<p>Both COVID-19 and flu can spread from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Person-to-person, ○ Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet). ○ Both are spread mainly by droplets and, ○ It is also possible that a person can get infected by physical human contact (e.g. shaking hands) or by touching a surface or object that has virus on it and then touching his/her own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. 	<p>While COVID-19 and flu viruses are thought to spread in similar ways, COVID-19 is more contagious among certain populations and age groups than the flu.</p> <p>Also, COVID-19 has been observed to have more super-spreading events than flu.</p>

PEOPLE AT HIGH-RISK FOR SEVERE ILLNESS

SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES
<p>Both COVID-19 and flu illness can result in severe illness and complications. Those at highest risk include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Older adults ○ People with certain underlying medical conditions ○ Pregnant people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Flu: Young children are at higher risk of severe illness from flu. ○ COVID-19: School-aged children infected with COVID-19 are at higher risk of Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C).

COMPLICATIONS

SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES
<p>Both COVID-19 and flu can result in complications, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Pneumonia○ Respiratory failure○ Acute respiratory distress syndrome (i.e. fluid in lungs)○ Sepsis○ Cardiac injury (e.g. heart attacks and stroke)○ Multiple-organ failure (respiratory failure, kidney failure, shock)○ Worsening of chronic medical conditions (involving the lungs, heart, nervous system or diabetes)○ Inflammation of the heart, brain or muscle tissues○ Secondary bacterial infections (i.e. infections that occur in people who have already been infected with flu or COVID-19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Flu: Most people who get flu will recover in a few days to less than two weeks, but some people will develop complications, some of these complications are listed above.○ COVID-19: complications can include: blood clots in the veins and arteries of the lungs, heart, legs or brain and multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C)

APPROVED TREATMENTS

SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES
<p>People at high-risk of complications or who have been hospitalized for COVID-19 or flu should receive supportive medical care to help relieve symptoms and complications.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Flu: Prescription influenza antiviral drugs are FDA-approved to treat flu.○ COVID-19: The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has developed guidance on the treatment of COVID-19 external icon, however, there are currently no drugs or other therapeutics approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to prevent or treat COVID-19.

VACCINE

SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES
<p>Vaccines for COVID-19 and flu must be approved or authorized for emergency use (EUA) by the FDA.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Flu: There are multiple FDA-licensed influenza vaccines produced annually to protect against the 3 or 4 flu viruses that scientists anticipate will circulate each year.○ COVID-19: Currently there is no vaccine to prevent COVID-19.